



Mennonite Life

Strategic Plan Framework
2023 - 2027

Approved by Mennonite Life Board Sep. 21, 2023

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INTRODUCTION

STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES; WHERE TO PUT OUR EMPHASIS NOW

Mennonite Life strategic planning was led by a steering committee of board members, staff members, and Anne W. Ackerson, an independent consultant hired to guide the planning process. Process highlights included benchmarking research carried out by pairs of board and staff, a workshop that involved staff, board, and 15+ community partners January 13 -14, 2023, and feedback to drafts.

Our last 5-year strategic plan prioritized creating one organization from what was functionally three separate ones, hiring professional staff to lead key areas, and building a relevant brand as the basis for communications, education, and promotions. These goals have been met and form a strong foundation on which to build this plan.

During the January 2023 sessions, staff members identified several strengths: organizational structure and people's roles are well-defined; systems work well to support staff; and a shared focus on positive customer experience. Staff highlighted needs: to grow audiences across a wider range of generations and develop sustainable financial revenue and donor funding. They expressed support for the organization's vision and mission and called for the strategic planning process to flow through to specific implementation plans that enable them to be confident they're carrying out the intended steps.

Staff, board, and community partners identified these external trends as top ones affecting our planning:

- Lancaster, Pennsylvania is the top destination for individuals seeking retirement community living, and these communities offer lifelong learning opportunities.
- Experience economy
- Value-driven philanthropy
- Transformative experiences attract value

USING, UPDATING, AND REFRESHING THE PLAN

This strategic plan provides a set of broad strategic priorities, specific strategies, and reporting over a five-year period. It provides the basis for:

Development of detailed annual operational work plans and corresponding monitoring.
Transparency and information sharing across the organization.
Performance reporting to stakeholders, including funders, government agencies, and the public.
Assessment of overall staffing alignment and identification of needed committees and task forces, as appropriate.
Development of grant funding requests, to help resource mission impact.

Each year, Mennonite Life board and staff will review and refresh the plan. This review includes stakeholder, and possibly funder, input as needed. Annual work plans created from this strategic plan will be shared with the board, as appropriate, for their information.

VISION

Our vision is diverse communities connecting across boundaries by knowing and valuing their own and each other's stories of life, faith, cultures, and histories.

Vision Illumination

- We understand ourselves to be conservers of the historical and ongoing stories of diverse Anabaptists with connections to Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.
- We understand ourselves to be learners, actively pursuing new information and mutually beneficial relationships across boundaries.
- We understand ourselves to be communicators, interpreting Lancaster Anabaptist-connected stories for interested audiences.

MISSION

Our mission is to hold, honor, and share items and stories featuring the lived experiences and faith values of Lancaster Mennonites and interrelated communities.

Mission Illumination

- We recognize and value cultural diversity within Lancaster Mennonite-connected communities.
- We recognize and value important relationships with interrelated communities, especially, but not limited to, those with Native American partners and African American partners.

CORE VALUES

Education

We encourage exploration of diverse, Mennonite-related historical backgrounds, cultures, stories

Preservation

We keep and care for documents and artifacts

Accessibility

We proactively make our collections and educational experiences broadly available

Intentional Health

We nurture personal and organizational health, living with integrity and accountability

Relationships

We seek to be connected and to connect others

Faith

As communities we seek to follow Christ in daily life

SHARED EMPHASES

These items of shared emphasis flow through the plan's goals and strategies so that Mennonite Life can meet its mission. This list will evolve over time as new opportunities or issues emerge.

A dynamic place for Mennonite and Anabaptist stories As a recognized collecting and educational organization, Mennonite Life is committed to welcoming, preserving, and providing public access to historically significant materials related to a variety of Anabaptist and interrelated communities. We find ways, in the flow of our planning and work, to inspire, document, and share stories and information that serves Mennonite and other communities, now and in the future.

Collections stewardship In order to properly manage our holdings for users today and for generations to come, Mennonite Life prioritizes responsible collecting, preservation, appropriate collections housing facilities, and community access. Coordinated and forward-thinking stewardship across all artifact, library, and archival collections enables us to offer robust access and be seen as a vibrant and growing information hub.

Working across traditional boundaries Mennonite Life prioritizes strategies and resources that bridge a variety of diverse perspectives and deepen intergenerational dialogue. By doing so, we add new levels of discovery to our work and to our visitors' experiences. As a learning organization, we seek to learn from partners who have been overlooked as rich resources of talent and insight in the past.

Belonging for people of every background and ability Mennonite Life is committed to a conscious, sustained effort to instill the values of diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion throughout the fabric of the organization. Anabaptists believe everyone has something to contribute, and, as such, the organization is committed to taking thoughtful and decisive action to create conditions in which everyone feels they can engage as full and valued participants in Mennonite Life's vision and mission.

Strategic partnerships and collaborations Creative, intentional partnerships and collaborations are essential to leveraging Mennonite Life's opportunities and addressing its challenges. We cultivate strategic partnerships with educational and cultural institutions, as well as with local governments and community-based groups. Innovative partnerships add value and diversity to Mennonite Life's public programming as well as inform our internal thinking and practices.

Organizational Excellence We hold ourselves to high standards of effectiveness in everything we do. Intentions matter, and measurable results matter most.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGIC GOALS 2023 – 2027



Offer Sought-After Learning Experiences

Goal: Become a multi-generational learning hub by developing experiential educational public programming - for adults, families, and students - using stories grounded in the lived experiences and faith values of diverse Lancaster Mennonites and interrelated communities.

Result: Mennonite Life is recognized as a hub for intergenerational and intercommunity learning.

How we'll do it together

- Educational and public programming connect the experiences of diverse Lancaster County Mennonites and interrelated communities to local, national, and global stories or conversations.
 - Develop educational public programming that is: relevant, memorable, people-centered, uses storytelling, has intergenerational aspects, and furthers mission impact.
 - Ask audiences what they need or want as part of program development.
 - Strive for equity and inclusion in program development and implementation, partnerships, messaging, and access.
- Develop and launch an updated comprehensive plan for the 1719 Museum and grounds with aspects that address preservation, interpretation, facilities maintenance and planning, ecology, and business plan.
- Develop and launch public programming that brings audiences to the Mennonite Life Visitors Center for reasons beyond the Tabernacle Experience. i.e. begin bringing awareness to the Visitors Center as a public space that accommodates educational programming.
- Ensure marketing and communications efforts are reaching target audiences and advancing the mission, all through the established Mennonite Life brand and voice.

Success Indicators (qualitative and quantitative measures)

- Educational field trip programming meets PA curricula standards in Social Studies and other subject areas
- Evidence of increasing community awareness and interest in Mennonite Life's educational mission – across all sites
- Extent of audience diversity each program or learning experience draws
- An increasing number of people who interact with Mennonite Life choose to become new members
- Revenue results: programs evidence a net positive financial result



Strengthen Collections Stewardship & Access

Goal: Ensure Mennonite Life's collections management and preservation are coordinated across all artifact, archival, and library functions.

Result: Improve policy-based control, physical care, and user access to collections. All collections under the professional care of the Collections Curator, no matter their location.

How we'll do it together

- Prioritize collections management, preservation, storage, and access as key functions supporting educational programming, research, and community engagement.
- A multi-year effort to review collections for their alignment with our collections scope, interpretive goals, and Mennonite Life's mission.
- Identify and preserve material and stories from many diverse perspectives, with racial diversity being one type of diversity featured.
- Increase virtual access to the collections through digitization efforts.
- Increase physical access to the collections, and physical site, through site improvements
- Communicate proactively to our constituents about the types of collections Mennonite Life would like to acquire.

Success Indicators (qualitative and quantitative measures)

- Increased mission impact & effectiveness as evidenced by annual number of researchers served, number of articles submitted for *Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage* publication consideration, number of research citations.
- Researcher satisfaction with collections access and reference team knowledge and assistance, measured through regular surveys.
- Addition to collections of stories and materials that preserve history of Mennonite communities of color and other Mennonite groups that are underrepresented in Mennonite Life collections.
- All collections items have been processed and located in a way that they are easily findable.



Invest in Team Vitality

Goal: Develop Mennonite Life's staff team and supporting infrastructure so that the team has the information and tools needed to make timely decisions and excel in their roles. Ensure that board, staff, and volunteers reflect the demographics of the organization's constituent communities.

Result: A workplace with meaning, joy, excellence, and positive dynamics. Improved ability to meet the organization's planned goals and overall mission, while keeping fun part of the mix!

How we'll do it together

In General

- Carry out regular communication with staff, volunteers, and board members in a variety of formats that emphasizes transparency of information while providing interpretative comments for technical communications such as financial reports.
- Provide opportunities for individual and team growth and recognition; consider activities accomplishing critical work that engage staff across all departments.

Staff focus

- Determine staffing needed to reach strategic objectives and commit resources to the needed level.
- Ensure salary equity across positions with similar levels of complexity and responsibility.
- Provide professional growth opportunities to ensure that staff is equipped to excel in their roles.
- Hire and retain qualified staff through human resources practices that emphasize diversity, living wages with benefits, and attend to the appropriate rhythms of work and life.

Board focus

- Expand the diversity, competencies, and networks of the board to increase organizational capacity and resilience.
- Review the board committees structure and realign, if needed, in order to support this strategic plan and the staff team carrying it out.

Volunteer focus

- Increase the group of regular—weekly or monthly—volunteers to expand organizational capacity and resilience.
- Implement a documented, systematic approach to recruiting and retaining volunteers. For example, using standard applications and following standard procedures in training and integrating new volunteers.
- Find appropriate ways for regular volunteers to receive regular communication on organizational initiatives, to help them feel “in the know” without creating undue burden on the staff team.

Success Indicators (qualitative and quantitative measures)

- Ability to attract and retain great talent—on staff, on board, and among general volunteers—measurably increases. Measurement based on recruitment and retention numbers.
- More racially diverse and culturally competent board, staff, volunteers. Measurement based on new partnerships and improving feedback from people of color and other historically Mennonite-marginalized groups.
- Annual staff evaluations indicate a high level of job satisfaction.
- Staff compensation meets or exceeds field standards (ex: American Alliance of Museum compensation reports, regional compensation reports)
- Larger, more diverse, and more active group of regular—weekly or monthly—volunteers.



Effectively Manage Facilities

Goal: Develop a comprehensive approach to building maintenance and site development that supports Mennonite Life's vision, mission, values, and brand.

Result: Delivery of a superior visitor experience, a safe and secure workplace and repository for collections, and meets the changing needs of the organization, the community, and diverse constituencies served.

How we'll do it together

- Identify and address ways to reduce environmental impacts of buildings and the landscape
- Proactively maintain facilities through planning, budgeting, and timely hiring of qualified contractors. This strategy includes evaluation of staff and volunteer needs to support proactive maintenance.
- Create sustainable plan for how mission-based income, combined with fundraising, addresses resources for building maintenance needs.

1719 Museum

- As part of the broader comprehensive strategic planning that addresses short- and long-term site development issues and use of all buildings, including attention to accessibility.
- Develop clear, written plans for historic preservation, restoration, and maintenance efforts, beginning with assessment of current conditions and including professional input.

Mennonite Life Collections Building

- Continue improving collections storage and related work areas.
- Improve library space for better researcher and general customer experience.
- Begin planning for the physical requirements of a more robust exhibitions program that includes regularly changing exhibits.

Mennonite Life Visitors Center

- Update introduction to Mennonites & Amish exhibit
- Replace roof

- Intentionally revisit use of theater space

Success Indicators (qualitative and quantitative measures)

- Buildings are safe, warm, dry, and pest-free
- Land is appropriately managed per this plan
- Facilities are primarily powered by green energy (solar panels, etc) and waste generated in them takes advantage of easily-accessible recycling options
- Successful funding for exhibition development, preservation, ongoing maintenance



Create Financial Growth

Goal: Achieve financial growth and sustainability with a diversified funding model that balances careful management of mission-business income, contributions & grants, and long-term investments.

Result: Stable and growing financial resources to meet the mission and fund increasingly effective community impact.

How we'll do it together

- Develop greater shared ownership of revenue generation across the organization.
- Diversify donor base by expanding our reach to a broader range of demographics.
- Develop a strategy for significantly growing our long-term investments.
- Ensure target audiences know how they can financially support Mennonite Life and are regularly invited to do so.
- Pursue funding for priorities developed under the goals in this framework.
- Manage budget – mission business, donations, grants, and long-term investments – to achieve a positive annual bottom line.

Success Indicators (qualitative and quantitative measures)

- A positive bottom line on the organization's financial statements for 3 years in a row
- Increase our number of active donors (defined as someone who gave within the last 3 years) by 10%.
- Increase our number of family memberships by 5%.
- Confirm, through qualitative and quantitative measures, that we're reaching young adults, families with children, and high school and college students.

Priority Goals, by location, as identified during All-staff Meeting on 7/17/23:

1719 Museum

- ✓ Effectively Manage Facilities
- ✓ Offer Sought-after Learning Experiences
- ✓ Strengthen Collections

Mennonite Life Collections Building

- ✓ Strengthen Collections Stewardship & Access
- ✓ Invest in Team Vitality
- ✓ Offer Sought-after Learning Experiences

Mennonite Life Visitors Center

- ✓ Offer Sought-after Learning Experiences
- ✓ Effectively Manage Facilities
- ✓ Invest in Team Vitality